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Dept. of State, RPS/IPS, Margaret P. Grafeld, Dir.
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Date 2/27/02 Exemption _____

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E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: PREL, UR
SUBJECT: MEDIA TREATMENT: HOUSE VETO ON CONTRA AID

1. ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ ENTIRE TEXT

2. SUMMARY

THE SOVIET MEDIA ARE TREATING THE HOUSE VOTE
ON CONTRA AID AS A SERIOUS DEFEAT FOR THE
ADMINISTRATION BUT NOT A DECISIVE ONE. THEY
EXPECT THE ADMINISTRATION TO CONTINUE ITS
EFFORTS TO PERSUADE THE CONGRESS, BUT THEIR
ANALYSES IMPLY THAT, ABSENT PRESSURE TACTICS, THE
ADMINISTRATION WILL FAIL. END SUMMARY.

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3. ACCORDING TO THE SOVIET MEDIA, THE HOUSE
VOTE REPRESENTS A PERSONAL DEFEAT FOR
PRESIDENT REAGAN: HE LED THE CAMPAIGN OF "INTIMI-
DATION" AND "SCARE TACTICS" AGAINST THE HOUSE,
AND UNDER HIS LEADERSHIP THE WHITE HOUSE,
THE STATE DEPARTMENT, THE PENTAGON, AND THE
CIA "OPENLY" SOUGHT TO "TWIST THE ARMS OF
CONGRESSMEN." AT THE SAME TIME, THE VOTE
REPRESENTS A REJECTION OF THE ADMINISTRATION'S
"INTERVENTIONIST" AND "ADVENTURIST" POLICIES.
ACCORDING TO THE SOVIET MEDIA, THE LAWMAKERS
WERE ALSO EXPRESSING THEIR CONCERN THAT AID
FOR THE CONTRAS WOULD LEAD TO U.S. MILITARY

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ACTIONS AGAINST NICARAGUA.

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4. THE MEDIA ARE, HOWEVER, WARNING THAT THE BATTLE IS FAR FROM OVER. THE HOUSE WILL CONSIDER POSSIBLE VARIATIONS IN APRIL. ARTICLES QUOTE ADMINISTRATION SPOKESMEN AS SAYING THAT THE ADMINISTRATION WILL CONTINUE TO SEEK CONGRESSIONAL APPROVAL OF CONTRA ASSISTANCE. THEY ALSO REPORT THAT THE REPUBLICAN-CONTROLLED SENATE IS SCHEDULED TO VOTE ON THE QUESTION, AND FUNDING FOR THE CONTRAS WILL CONTINUE TO COME FROM THE CIA AND "PRIVATE SOURCES."

5. MEDIA ANALYSES IMPLY CAUTIOUS OPTIMISM ABOUT THE RESULTS. THEY CLAIM THAT THE ADMINISTRATION IS ISOLATED. PRAVDA CORRESPONDENT GAN, CITING AN OPINION POLL, STATES THAT A MAJORITY OF AMERICANS OPPOSES THE ADMINISTRATION'S "AGGRESSIVE" POLICIES IN CENTRAL AMERICA. PRAVDA COMMENTATOR OVCHINNIKOV NOTES

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THAT AFTER THE PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS ON NICARAGUA, LARGE NUMBERS OF AMERICANS CALLED THEIR CONGRESSMEN TO VOICE THEIR OPPOSITION TO THE ADMINISTRATION'S POLICIES. THE MEDIA ALSO CLAIM THAT:

--CENTRAL AND SOUTH AMERICAN COUNTRIES ARE OPPOSED TO THE PRESIDENT'S EFFORTS;

--THE ADMINISTRATION'S ARGUMENTS HAVE NO BASIS IN FACT, SINCE THERE IS NO SOVIET OR COMMUNIST THREAT AND THE ADMINISTRATION'S ASSERTIONS TO THE CONTRARY ARE NOTHING MORE THAN "NEO-MCCARTHYISM."

COMMENT

6. WHILE THE SOVIETS ARE BREATHING A SIGH OF RELIEF, THEY REALIZE THAT NEITHER THEY NOR THE NICARAGUANS ARE OUT OF THE WOODS YET ON THE QUESTION OF CONTRA AID. THUS, THEY WILL CONTINUE TO WATCH THE DEBATE CLOSELY--AND TO AVOID PUBLIC STEPS WHICH WOULD HELP THE ADMINISTRATION'S CAMPAIGN. COMBS

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